

Section 7: Making the Local Case for Preschool for All

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Introduction

Many studies, as summarized in Table 8-1, confirm both the short-term and long-term benefits of quality preschool. Although the positive results are most pronounced for children who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, all children benefit from high-quality early education programs.

But how does one make *the local case* for voluntary Preschool for All?

This section provides a brief list of strategies, a table summarizing the benefits of preschool, and a sample presentation for making the local case for preschool.

Strategy 1: Showcase “Proud” Programs

Having the support of the School Superintendent and other powerful community leaders is essential, notes Paul Miller, executive director of Kidango. Miller’s agency now administers preschool programs on all eight elementary school campuses in Union City in the New Haven Unified School District in Alameda County and has just begun the operation of child development programs for Alum Rock in Santa Clara County.

Kidango’s operation of preschool programs on all elementary school campuses in Union City comes the closest to universal access of any program currently operating in the State of California. Although Kidango is a private agency, it enjoys strong support from the school system in the form of reduced occupancy costs and other in-kind support.

One key to the program’s community support is that Miller and other staff are always ready to welcome visitors to the program. Miller points out the practical benefits of a program that focuses on language development in a city that is ethnically, economically and culturally diverse. He notes that the program is staffed predominantly by teachers with Bachelor’s degrees, and he reveals that all of the programs score above 5 on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (“Some as high as 6.8 out of 7”), and that all are either accredited or in the process of becoming accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. He wins support from businesses and foundations to complement state, federal and local funds, and thereby strengthens the image of the program in the broader community.

Support for preschool from the former New Haven Unified School District Superintendent Ruth McKenna is evident: “There is no substitute for front-loading literacy,” McKenna told the *San Jose Mercury News* (Corcoran, 2002). “My effort here is to demonstrate over time that this is successful in a district with demographics that reflect greater California.”

Strategy 2: Document Impact on School Performance

It is also important to provide local evidence of the effectiveness of preschool programs in narrowing the educational gap. Perhaps the best California example of this strategy comes from

the Elk Grove School District near Sacramento. The school district has been tracking the scores of children enrolled in preschool programs for several years. Based on data, children who attended school-based pre-kindergarten programs (Head Start, State Preschool, Title I Preschool) in schools where a majority of the children are eligible for free or reduced price lunch scored above the national average on the Stanford 9 in first grade in reading, language and math.

As Elizabeth Pinkerton, former director of preschool programs notes, “When we show these data to school officials, they speak for themselves.” The leadership and support of School Superintendent Dave Gordon has been essential. Elk Grove, unlike most school districts in California, allocates 1/6th of its Title I Elementary and Secondary Education funds to preschool programs. Interestingly, when Santa Ana shared similar research findings with school officials, the school district responded by investing \$1.5 million in Title I funds in preschool services.

See the Appendix for a presentation recently provided by Elk Grove to the School Board with documentation of the effect of preschool on school performance.

Strategy 3: Localize Estimates of Savings

It may be possible to estimate the local savings that would eventually be possible if quality preschool were truly available to all children.

As noted early in the first section of the Toolkit (page 5), one of the anticipated benefits of Preschool for All is a reduction in grade retention and school dropout rates. According to a cost benefit analysis based on the Chicago Parent-Child Centers, a program that serves economically disadvantaged children, every \$1 spent on high quality early education saves \$7 in reduced expenditures for special education, delinquency, crime control, welfare and lost taxes – or an estimated \$48,000 in benefits per child from a half-day preschool program (Reynolds et al., 2002).

Although research has traditionally focused on the benefits of preschool for children in poverty, problems such as grade retention and high dropout rates are more common among the middle class than often assumed (Barnett & Hustedt, 2003). Thus, based on the fact that 9% of children in families with incomes in the top 20% income bracket are held back in school, compared with 18% in the lowest 20%, and that preschool helps reduce grade retention, the National Institute for Early Education Research (2003) estimates the savings associated with making preschool available to *all* children to be \$25,000 per child, or roughly half of the benefit estimated for children from low-income families alone.

Strategy 4: Make the Case for Equity

In making the case for Preschool for All, advocates frequently confront resistance from those who correctly point out that California (not to mention the nation as a whole) currently allocates insufficient funds even to provide preschool or other early care and education services for all of the poorest, most vulnerable three- and four-year-olds who are likely to derive the greatest benefits from quality preschool.

However, as discussed in Section 1, at least in cities with populations of more than 250,000, two-thirds of the preschool children are estimated to have at least one of the risk factors associated with not being ready for school: living in poverty, or in single parent households, or with a mother with less than a high school education, or in a household where English is a second language (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000; Zill & West, 2000). Thus, it is questionable whether it is fair, much less effective, to target preschool to children with one risk factor such as living in poverty while denying preschool to the rest of the children. Preschool participation is below the national average in California, and is lowest for children from families just above the poverty line (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2003). Especially in California, where a family can be unable to afford food and housing and yet still be above the income ceiling for publicly subsidized programs, making poverty the criterion for admission to preschool seems ill-advised.

Furthermore, making preschool accessible to *all* children may be the most effective way to ensure that services finally reach the most vulnerable children. Despite nearly 40 years of advocacy, Head Start and the State Preschool Program still serve only a fraction of the eligible children, and waiting lists for subsidized child care for low-income families continue to grow. It is possible that the only way to build the public will necessary to secure sufficient funds to make preschool available to all children from low-income families is to make the service accessible to the non-poor as well.

Finally, there is the issue of uneven distribution of preschool services. The supply of early care and education may vary greatly even within one county. While there is sufficient supply to serve 18% of the total population in west Los Angeles, there is only enough to serve 6% in east Los Angeles (Fuller et al, 1997; Cuthbertson et al, PACE, March, 2000, Los Angeles County Child Care Needs Assessment). Only when there is a public commitment to make preschool available to all children is it likely that there will be systematic attention to these inequities in preschool availability.

In making the case for preschool as “the most important grade,” W. Steven Barnett and Jason Hustedt (2003) cite an article by John Merrow (2002) in *USA Today*:

“We can, and should, be creating a preschool system that would be good enough for everyone. Public preschools should be built the same way we constructed our highway system: the same road available to all Americans, rich and poor.”

Strategy 5: Seek Endorsements from Beneficiaries, Not Just Practitioners

It is one thing when early care and education providers tout the benefits of preschool; it is quite another when the same message comes from so-called “third party” endorsers -- parents, business leaders or elected officials who will play no part in the delivery of the programs.

California Poll Underlines Parent Support

Poll results suggest that California parents strongly support expanded access to preschool as a strategy to promote school readiness. From September 26 to October 8, 2002, Peter D. Hart

Research Associates conducted a statewide survey on behalf of First 5 California. Poll results indicated the following:

- “This research’s key conclusion is that the large majority of Californians believe that the state has a responsibility to ensure that all young children are able to attend preschool and pre-kindergarten programs” (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2002).
- Nearly 80 percent of Californians believe that there should be state funds for preschool. One in two adults in California see preschool as so important that they think it should be provided at taxpayers’ expense to *all* families, regardless of income, according to the poll, and another 3 in 10 think the state should provide the funds for children from low-income families to voluntarily attend preschool.
- Because Californians believe that funding preschool is an investment that will pay off in improving student achievement in elementary and secondary school, they see preschool as part of the strategy for improving K-12 education.

Business Community Support

In recruiting local business support for Preschool, it may be helpful to refer to the endorsements of other business leaders. For example, Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, and Rob Grunewald, Regional Economic Analyst, make a convincing economic case for publicly funding preschool and other early childhood development programs (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2003).

Noting that “well-grounded benefit-to-cost ratios are seldom computed for public projects,” Rolnick and Grunewald propose instead calculating the “internal rate of return” – or the interest rate received for an investment consisting of payments and revenue that occur at regular periods. Based on the High/Scope study that linked enrollment in the Perry Preschool program to improved school completion rates and reduced welfare and crime, Rolnick and Grunewald estimate the internal rate of return, adjusted for inflation, for that program at 16 percent. “Compared with other public investments, and even those in the private sector, an Early Childhood Development Program seems like a good buy.”

Key Role of Newspaper Publisher and Mayor in Florida

Behind Florida’s successful constitutional amendment stipulating that all 4-year-olds in the state be offered a free preschool education by 2005 is the involvement of two people who had no background as early childhood educators. David Lawrence, Jr., publisher emeritus of *The Miami Herald* and now president of the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation, is an effective champion for preschool because he is an articulate, respected former newspaper leader – someone who had no vested interest in early childhood services. Lawrence worked strategically with Mayor Alex Penelas of Miami-Dade County to develop the preschool movement in the state.

In 1999 Lawrence organized and Penelas convened a Mayor’s Children’s Summit attended by 6,000 people. They then worked to convince county voters to pass a Children’s Trust, which

provides funding for child care, after-school programs and health-related activities. Finally, they gathered almost a million petition signatures throughout the state to place an initiative on the ballot to guarantee access to preschool to every 4-year-old, and the measure was overwhelmingly approved.

Key Leaders in California

In California major champions outside the usual early care and education circles are also emerging. At its July 2003 meeting, the First 5 California Children and Families Commission heard from local education leaders in support of First 5 Preschool for All Demonstration Projects (a funding allocation of \$100 million over 5-7 years was approved by the Commission at this meeting). Chairman Rob Reiner noted that politicians have for years said “Children are our future,” but there is rarely an investment made. Local leaders from Santa Clara County and the City of West Sacramento described their investments in local preschool programs.

Larry Aceves, Superintendent, Franklin-McKinley School District, Santa Clara County, reported that he is privileged to have a school board, city and county that is enlightened about the benefits of preschool. They understand that more needs to be done than simply educating children when they come through the kindergarten door. Recognizing the need for more resources and collaboration, two mayors in San Jose have made it a priority to work with preschools in the community. In a district in which 55% of the children are limited English proficient, 78% are on free and reduced lunch, and 52 languages are spoken, the school district produces and distributes all materials in four languages and offers free health and dental clinics. Because it is critical to maintaining funding, the district works closely with outside collaboratives.

Alfonso Anaya, Superintendent, Alum Rock Unified School District, Santa Clara County (who is serving in his third superintendent position in California), reported that Alum Rock Unified is the largest K-8 district in Santa Clara County with 16,000 students and is very impoverished. Superintendent Anaya is the Past President of the California Latino Superintendents Association, was a member of the Universal Preschool Framework Committee, and is also on the California School Boards Association, Superintendents Council. Having come from a migrant family of 11 non-English speaking children, and with his own background as a kindergarten teacher with a bachelor’s degree in child development, Superintendent Anaya fully appreciates the challenges schools face and the value of preschool. He stressed the importance of being aware of the needs of children with disabilities and other special needs and of children that are non-English speaking, and of including parents in planning preschool programs.

Christopher Cabaldon, Mayor, City of West Sacramento, stated that small and medium-sized cities are interested in supporting this type of preschool effort in their communities. Voters in West Sacramento in 2002 passed a one-half cent sales tax increase for a variety of purposes, with a portion allocated for preschool. Mayor Cabaldon is also proposing for City Council approval in 2004 a developers “impact” fee to fund preschool programs. As a Member of the Board of the League of California Cities, Mayor Cabaldon offered to work with First 5 California on developing a model ordinance for cities to use in looking at impact fees and special taxes to support child care wrap-around services and preschool.

Table 8-1. Benefits of Quality Preschool

| Short-Term Benefits | Source |
|--|---|
| <p>Children, especially those whose mothers have a low level of education, who attend well-planned, quality early childhood programs have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher rates of school readiness • Better language ability • Fewer behavior problems, and • Higher cognitive performance | <p><i>Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers.</i> Bowman, B., Donovan, M., & Burns, M. (Eds.) (2001). National Research Council, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.</p> |
| <p>Based on a stratified random sample of child care centers in California and three other states, children who attend child care with higher quality classroom practices have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better language skills and • Better math skills, from the preschool years into elementary school | <p><i>The Children of the Cost, Quality & Outcomes Study Go to School. Technical Report.</i> Peisner-Feinberg, E., Burchinal, M., Clifford, R., Yazejian, N., Culkin, M. Zelazo, J., Howes, C., Byler, P., Kagan, S. & Rustici, J. (1999). Chapel Hill: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.</p> |
| <p>Based on data collected in the Elk Grove School District, children who attended school-based Pre-kindergarten programs (Head Start, State Preschool, and Title I) performed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above the national average on the Stanford 9 in first grade • Their average NPR scores were 68 (Reading), 62 (Language), and 63 (Math) | <p>Data collected by Elk Grove School District in California, 2001-2002 school year (see attached presentation in this section).</p> |
| <p>Children participating in high quality child care programs scored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly better on language, print awareness, and math than did children from low quality centers. • The influence of child care quality was equal for children from poor and non-poor families, indicating that all children benefit from high quality. | <p><i>Smart Start and Preschool Child Care Quality in North Carolina: Changes Over Time and Relation to Children's Readiness.</i> Bryant, D., Maxwell, K., Taylor, K., Poe, M., Peisner-Feinberg, E., & Bernier, K. (2003). Chapel Hill, N.C.: Frank Porter Graham Institute.</p> |

Long-Term Benefits

Based on a follow-up study of children in a high quality preschool program in inner city Chicago:

- Every \$1 spent on high-quality early education programs saves \$7 in reduced future expenditures for special education, delinquency, crime control, welfare, and lost taxes -- or an estimated present value of \$48,000 in benefits per child from a half-day public school preschool program.
- Children who attended the preschool program had a 20 percent higher rate of high school graduation, a 42 percent lower rate of juvenile arrest for violent offenses, a 41 percent reduction in special education needs, and a 52 percent reduction in abuse and neglect.

Source

Long-Term Effects of an Early Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest: A 15-Year Follow-Up of Low-Income Children in Public School. Reynolds, A., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. (2001). *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285: 2339-2346.

Age 21 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers. Reynolds, A., Temple, J., Robertson, D., & Mann, E. (2002). University of Wisconsin (Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper #1245-22).

Based on a longitudinal study of disadvantaged children attending a 20-hour per week preschool program combined with frequent home visits, preschool children had:

- Fewer special education placements, grade retentions, teen pregnancies, and high school dropouts.
- The program was estimated to save \$7.16 for every \$1 spent.

Changed Lives: The Effects of the Perry Preschool Program on Youths through Age 19. Berreuta-Clement, et al. (1984) Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Foundation, Number 8.

Both of the above studies only look at low-income children. Based on the fact that 9% of children in families with incomes in the top 20% are held back in school, compared with 18% in the lowest 20%, NIEER estimates:

- The benefits across all children to be \$25,000 per child, or roughly half of the benefit estimated for children from low-income families.

National Institute for Early Education Research, Economic Benefits of Quality Preschool Education for America's 3- and 4-year olds. National Institute for Early Education Research. (2003). Available at: <http://nieer.org/resources/facts/index.php?FastFactID=6>.



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ELK GROVE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pre-Kindergarten Programs



Report to the Board of Education
September 15, 2003

Pre-Kindergarten Goals

- Children will be ready to learn and make a successful transition to kindergarten.
- Parents will be provided with parenting education, information about their child's learning, and job training.
- Provisions will be made for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Pre-Kindergarten classes.
- State and federal funding sources will be coordinated and aligned to enhance student learning and maximize student achievement.

2003-04 Pre-K Enrollment: **873** students

1. Head Start – 260 students
 - Eligibility: Federal poverty guidelines
 - Schools: Florin Elementary, Samuel Kennedy, Charles Mack, Florence Markofer, Prairie Elementary, David Reese
2. Title I – 210 students
 - Eligibility: Attendance at Title I school
 - Schools: Florin Elementary, Samuel Kennedy, Charles Mack, Prairie Elementary, David Reese
3. First 5 Sacramento (Prop 10) – 120 students
 - Eligibility: Attendance at Title I school
 - Schools: David Reese and Prairie Elementary
4. First 5 California (School Readiness Initiative) – 60 students
 - Eligibility: Attendance at Samuel Kennedy, Charles Mack or Prairie
 - School: Herman Leimbach Elementary
5. State Preschool – 40 students
 - Eligibility: State income guidelines
 - Schools: Samuel Kennedy and Charles Mack
6. Adult & Community Education
 - Partners Preschool – 144 students
 - William Daylor Child Development Center – 39 students

High Quality Standards and Curriculum

- District pre-kindergarten standards for Emerging Literacy and Emerging Numeracy are based on kindergarten standards and benchmarks.
- The pre-kindergarten program utilizes Letter People curriculum by Abrams & Company and Growing with Mathematics by McGraw Hill.



Highly Qualified Teaching Staff

- All Pre-K teachers have college degrees and child development backgrounds. They are paid on the same salary schedule as EGUSD K-12 teachers. New hires are required to possess a multiple subject teaching credential.
- All Pre-K instructional assistants have at least 6 units of early childhood education (ECE) courses. New hires are required to have 48 college units or an AA degree.
- Each class of 20 children is staffed with two adults (teacher and instructional assistant) and a part-time parent leader.

High Quality Professional Learning

- An instructional coach provides job embedded professional learning.
- In addition, teachers attend training each month to share ideas and articulate with kindergarten teachers.
- Elk Grove Unified School District has established a partnership with University of Texas through the CIRCLE (Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education) Project that has strengthened our focus on literacy and oral language development.

Our Pre-Kindergartens Serve ALL Students Through Creative Partnerships for Full Inclusion

- Collaboration with Sacramento County Office of Education
 - Prairie Elementary, 2 full inclusion classrooms
 - Florence Markofer Elementary, 2 full inclusion classrooms
- Collaboration with Intervention Services for Preschool Aged Children (ISPAC)
 - Florin Elementary, 2 full inclusion classrooms
- Therapeutic Preschool Classes, 2003-04
 - Herman Leimbach Elementary, 4 full inclusion classrooms

Innovative Use of Facilities

Classes have varied time schedules to maximize the use of the Pre-Kindergarten portable.

A.M. – 3.5 hours, Monday – Thursday

Or

3 hours, Monday – Friday

P.M. – 3.5 hours, Monday – Thursday

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classrooms

Twilight – 3 hours, Tuesday – Thursday

3:15 – 6:15 p.m.

Elk Grove's high quality
pre-kindergarten programs
have produced
high quality results.



Elk Grove's Longitudinal Study

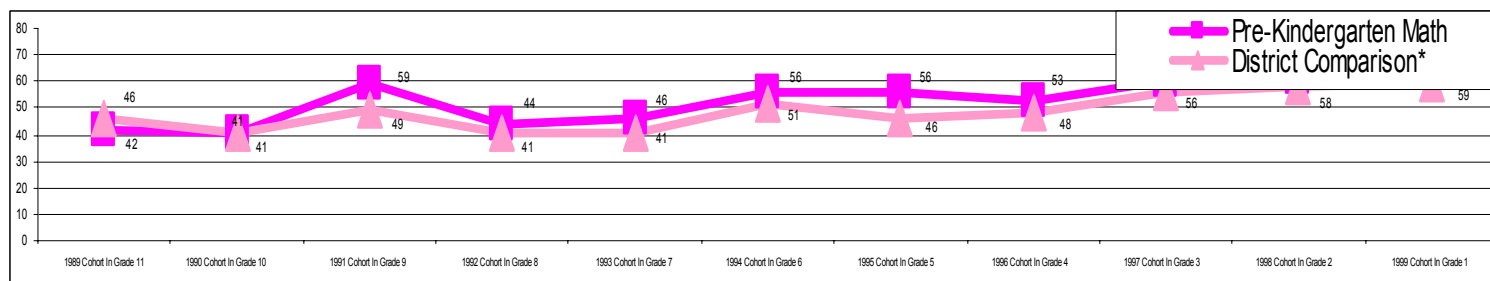
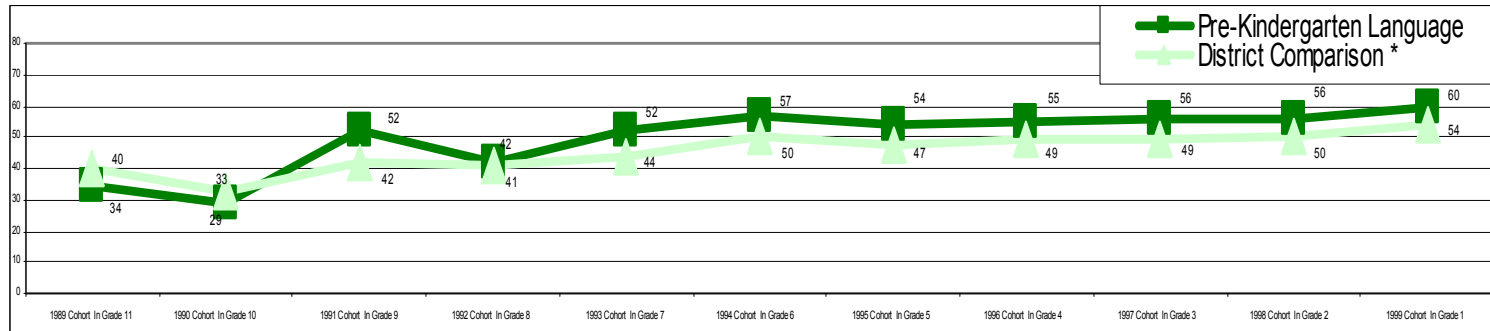
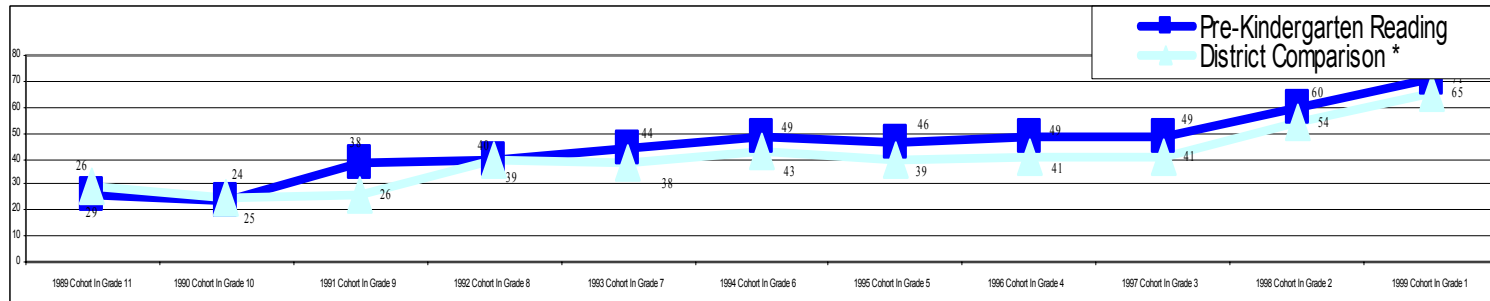


Elk Grove Unified School District's
Longitudinal Pre-Kindergarten Study
addresses the critical question:

Does pre-kindergarten result in strong
academic performance in later grades?

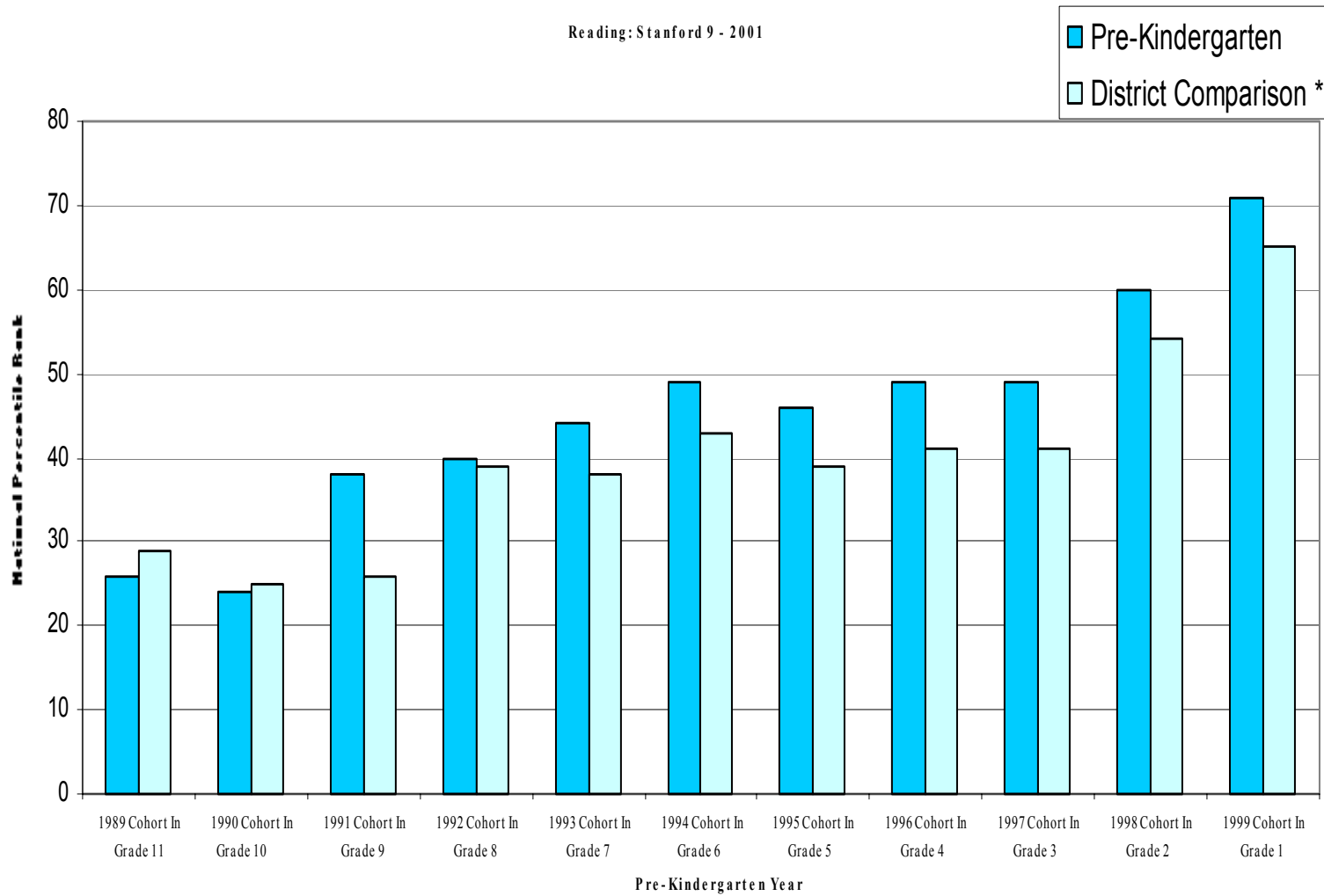
Longitudinal Study of Pre-Kindergarten Student Achievement in the Elk Grove Unified School District, 1989-2001

- Longitudinal study includes pre-kindergarten students who have been enrolled in the District since 1989.
- Study based upon 2001 results of the Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (SAT 9).
- Data demonstrates that children who attended pre-kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests when compared to the average scores of students at Title I schools.



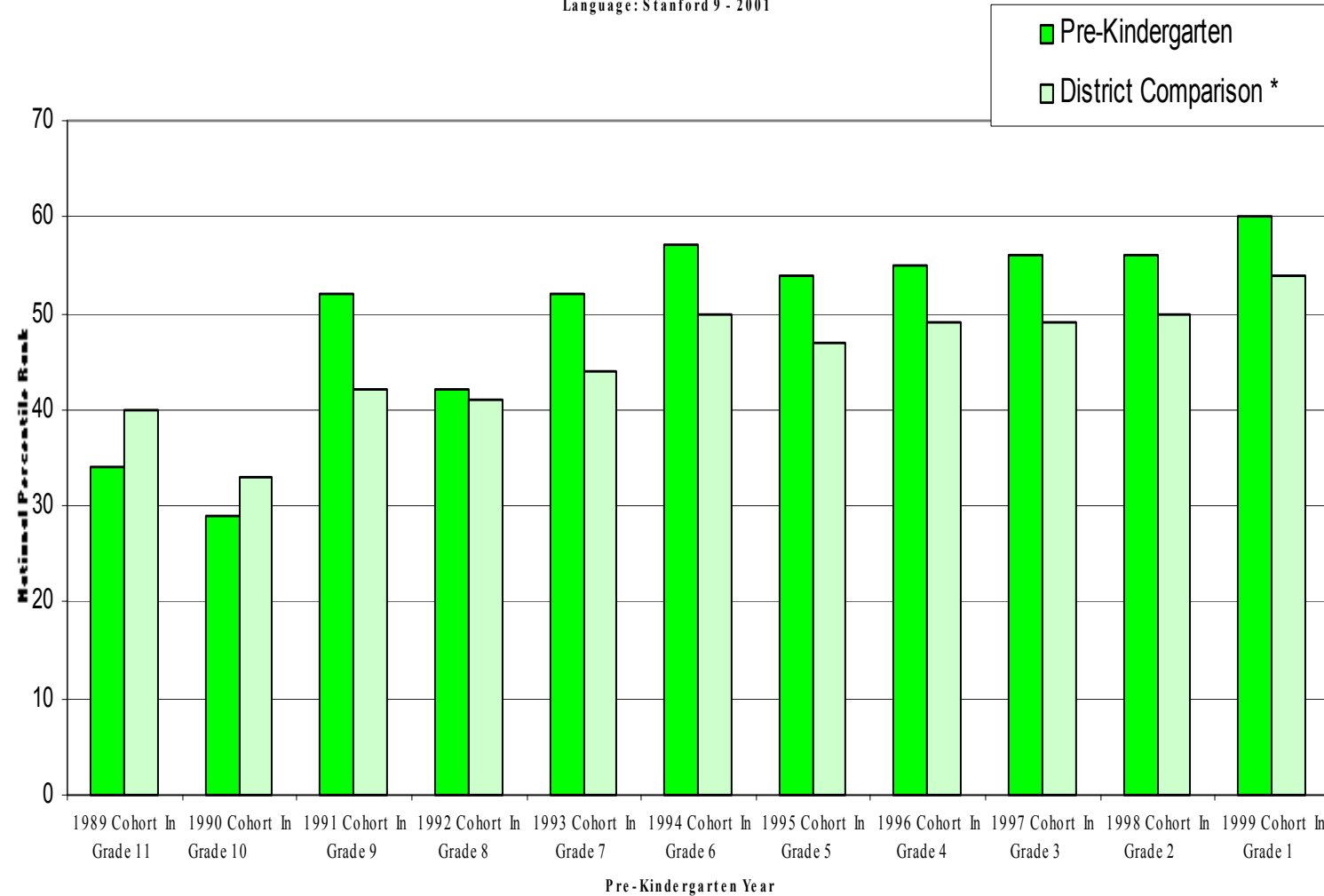
*The elementary comparison group consists of the scores of the students in the 10 Title I schools. The secondary comparison group consists of the high poverty secondary schools, Samuel Jackman, James Rutter Middle Schools, Florin and Valley High Schools.

Reading: Stanford 9 - 2001

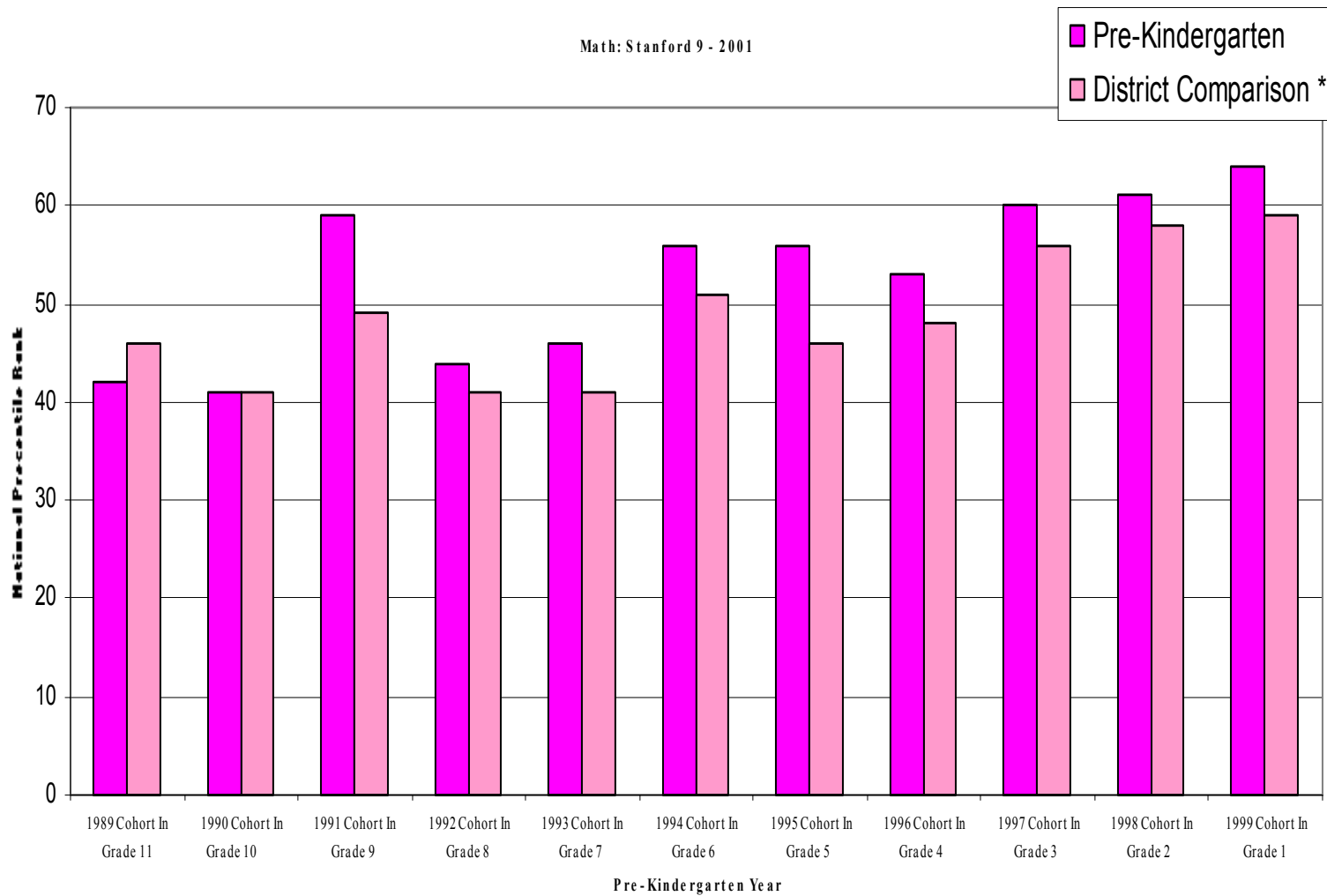


* The elementary comparison group consists of the scores of the students in the 10 Title 1 schools. The secondary comparison group consists of the high performing James Rutter Middle Schools, Florin and Valley High Schools.

Language: Stanford 9 - 2001



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New Opportunities 2003-2004

- School Readiness Initiative
(First 5 – Prop 10)
- Early Reading First
- The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- “Preschool for All” – Demonstration Projects



Pre-Kindergarten is the Way of the Future